

## CITY OF CONCORD

## NEWHAMPSHIRE

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# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES DECEMBER 7, 2012 7:30 A.M.

The meeting convened at 7:30 A.M. at The Nature Conservancy, 22 Bridge Street, Concord, NH. Refreshments were provided courtesy of Jan McClure.

PRESENT: Tim Bernier, Christopher Carley, Byron Champlin, Walter Chapin, Mark Coen, Larry

Gloekler, Stephen Heavener, Brad Hosmer, John Hoyt, Jan McClure, William Norton, Dan

St. Hilaire, and Claudia Walker

ABSENT: Allen Bennett, Peter Cook, Keith Nyhan, and Connie Rosemont

STAFF: Carlos P. Baía, Deputy City Manager – Development

Matt Walsh, Assistant for Special Projects Bev Rafferty, Administrative Assistant

#### 1. MINUTES FROM THE OCTOBER 26, 2012 MEETING

Tim Bernier requested edits to paragraph 7 on page 2 noting it was not the DTCSIP Committee that needed to define the approach but rather it was "staff" and he did not believe he had made the comment about there having been poor information about handicapped accessibility so he wanted that sentence removed entirely. Based on his edits, the paragraph would be revised to read as follows: "Tim Bernier noted that the DTCSIP Committee needs to come up with broad ideas on what they want to do so the engineering company does not have to keep redesigning concepts. Staff needs to define and better the approach to move forward. Guidelines need to be established." Byron Champlin then made a motion to accept the minutes as edited; seconded by Brad Hosmer; motion passed unanimously.

#### 2. BUSINESS ASSISTANCE OPTIONS

Byron Champlin had inquired at the last EDAC meeting what the city could offer to businesses to help them with relocation, expansion or new start-ups. Carlos Baía noted that, unlike in his former community, he has only had a handful of requests from entrepreneurs seeking to start or expand a business in Concord.

Mr. Baía noted if a person expresses an interest in setting up a business in Concord he will seek to meet with them in person. Meetings such as these typically last from one to three hours. During these sessions, Mr. Baía will review the business concept and provide referrals to appropriate funding or business advising entities as well as any industry contacts. If any tangible financial incentive is pertinent, he will also provide that information to the interested party.

If the person does not have a business plan, Mr. Baía would refer them to the Small Business Development Center as well as the Small Business Administration (SBA) website for guidance. The SBA offers e-learning courses on every component you need to start your own business.

In terms of property searches, City staff is usually familiar with the key tracts available. In addition, the City uses the New England Commercial Property Exchange and offers a link to it on the City's web site.

One weakness that Mr. Baía identified was in business recruitment. Recruitment efforts typically involve money. As an example, Mr. Baía noted that the City has not had a marketing budget in years. He also recognized that the NH Dept. of Resources and Economic Development has two recruiters with a \$100,000 marketing budget for the entire state. The challenge with this limitation for Concord is that it is difficult to get companies outside of the area to look north of Manchester. He acknowledged that on a number of visits with growing Concord companies he has been told that while the business owner may love Concord his prospective employees and clients have a preference to stay to the south making it challenging for him/her to grow the business here.

Mr. Baía noted that the City in the past had a full-time business development coordinator but this position was eliminated with the significant budget cuts in 2009. Last year, a half-time, 20 hrs./week marketing/outreach position was proposed but ultimately did not make it into the final budget.

Stephen Heavener remarked that Concord needs to get a marketing person. Matt Walsh noted that marketing funds were taken out of Concord's budget about 10 years ago.

Mr. Baía continued that he had thought about using an intern to do this work but this type of work requires a person with polished skills to talk directly with business people and provide contacts and follow-up making it challenging for an intern.

Matt Walsh noted that retention is more important than recruitment and Mr. Champlin asked if the City is trying for that. Mr. Baía noted that the Mayor and he have visited many existing businesses over the past few years.

Stephen Heavener noted there is not a lot of recruitment taking place in New Hampshire. Todd Leach, President of Granite State College, and Dean Norton were two people noted that might be helpful to the City.

Byron Champlin noted that entrepreneurial growth and business start-ups are big items. Stephen Heavener noted there is just not a lot of it and we are not known as the place to do this.

Mr. Champlin remarked that if we support the creative economy, it will draw more people to Concord. Incubator space was a big item with the survey done for creative economy and Concord has that space available.

Impact fees were discussed and Carlos Baía informed EDAC that there is a change going before Planning Board on December 19<sup>th</sup> to waive impact fees in the Central Business District with the possible exception of the recreation impact fee. This change was initiated by staff. Mr. Baía also informed EDAC that Gloria McPherson, City Planner, will be attending the January 2013 EDAC meeting to review this proposal with the group.

Discussion then led to the new assessments of properties in Concord. Claudia Walker inquired if the City had received many calls regarding the new assessments and Mr. Baía indicated there had been a

number of inquiries. He also indicated that there is a meeting being coordinated through the Chamber of Commerce to discuss the assessments. Mr. Baía noted that he had spoken with Kathy Temchack, Director of Real Estate Assessments for the City of Concord. Ms. Temchack recognizes that the assessments are heavily dependent on information provided by commercial property owners. If there is information that would shed different light on the assessments, she is willing to look at it. Bill Norton provided some general percentage increase numbers, i.e. average increase was 13% but some assessments were as high as 30% increase and it was noted that assessments on commercial properties were hard to determine as Ms. Temchack did not have much information on comparable sales for that type of property. Mr. Norton also explained the assessment process to EDAC.

Claudia Walker noted that Ms. Temchack may have to make some assumptions because companies or people do not provide her with correct information on their assessment forms because they feel it's an invasion of their privacy.

Chairperson Carley inquired as to what EDAC could do. Could EDAC figure out some way to publicize that these services are available and tell business contacts to call Carlos Baía or Stephen Heavener? Mr. Heavener believes the best advantage is to have a person doing marketing and traveling around to advertise Concord.

Tim Bernier noted that the one thing small businesses do not want is a sales pitch – they are not interested in that and yet that is something the City does – a sales pitch.

Mr. Bernier noted he had worked with another community and within a month he had the required permits, etc. He believes Concord is too rigid. Chairperson Carley noted there is reason why government goes the speed it does.

Larry Gloekler suggested marketing the whole region (Bow, Pembroke, etc.).

Matt Walsh noted the city is working on a new web site and it is going to move economic development to the front page. The site is being entirely redesigned.

Byron Champlin noted Creative Concord became aware of artists looking for studio spaces. These are small business people and he has found there is no mechanism to find such space. Walter Chapin inquired if an informal bulletin board might work or Craig's list.

Tim Bernier left the meeting at 8:45 A.M.

#### 3. REVIEW OF MAIN STREET RECOMMENDATIONS

Chairperson Carley noted there will be more chances for EDAC to weigh in on this matter. The City Engineer and staff will work up the design based on the report accepted by the City Council.

#### 4. OTHER BUSINESS

➤ Carlos Baía noted today is Bev Rafferty's last EDAC meeting as she is retiring at the end of the month. Everyone thanked Bev for her service and she told EDAC it had been a pleasure working with them.

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➤ The next meeting is scheduled for January 4, 2013 and Byron Champlin will check to see if his schedule permits and a conference room is available at Lincoln Financial, he can host EDAC that day. He will be in touch with Carlos Baía.

### 5. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business and upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 8:50 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly A. Rafferty Administrative Assistant